

SPECIFICATION

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

[Electronic Version 1.2.8]

PORTABLE PARTY SYSTEM AND METHOD

Background of Invention

[0001] U.S. Patent No. 4,533,138 issued August 6, 1985 to Rodriguez, Jr. et al. discloses a multiple sport training device in which a user may selectively attach multiple different attachment members including batting training devices, ball rebounders, catching nets, and batting tees. U.S. Patent No. 4,726,592 issued February 23, 1988 to Callahan discloses an amusement device and method in which portions of a foldable container form a play board for playing a game in which balls are dropped onto the play board in attempting to cause the balls to bounce and fall on rebound into a cylindrical member. U.S. Patent No. 5,377,976 issued January 3, 1995 to Matherne et al. discloses a portable basketball system with a ballast-fillable base configured to house component parts of the basketball system for storage and transportation. The entire disclosure of each of the foregoing patents is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

[0002]

Summary of Invention

[0003] The present invention is directed to a portable party system and associated method for providing entertainment and amusement at parties such as birthday parties, and other parties for children, teenagers and adults. The invention contemplates the provision of one or more portable storage containers containing various different target assemblies and projectiles for use in the play of games. Advantageously, a cover of the container also functions as a supporting base adapted for the removable attachment of a target support assembly. The invention contemplates the provision of various diverse target assemblies including a basketball target, a milk bottle target, a rectangular target, a rectangular net target, a goalpost target, a knock-down target, a receptacle target, and a tiered coin toss target. In a method according to the present invention, participants compete in projectile throwing, tossing, and kicking games using the various different target assemblies and diverse projectiles such as footballs, soccer balls, basketballs, beanbags and soft throwing disks in contests to win coupons or tickets which may be exchanged for arcade-type prizes, such as toys, candy, balls, pencils, erasers, figurines, stuffed animals and the like.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

[0004] These and various other advantages and features of novelty that characterize the invention are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed hereto and forming a part hereof. However, for a better understanding of the invention, its advantages, and the objects obtained by its use, reference should be made to the drawings which form a further part hereof, and to the accompanying descriptive matter, in which there is illustrated and described a preferred embodiment of the invention.

Brief Description of Drawings

[0005] Figure 1 is a perspective view illustrating a container for party toys for use in the portable party system of the present invention.

[0006] Figure 2 is a perspective exploded view of the container of Figure 1, with the cover removed.

[0007] Figure 3 is a perspective view illustrating the topside of the cover of the container of Figure 1.

[0008] Figure 4 is a perspective view illustrating the underside of the cover of the container of Figure 1.

[0009] Figure 5 is a perspective view illustrating an attachment support base for use in the portable party system of the present invention.

[0010] Figure 6 is an exploded perspective view illustrating a basketball hoop target assembly for use in the portable party system of the present invention.

[0011] Figure 7 is a front elevational view illustrating a rectangular projectile target for use in the portable party system of the present invention.

[0012] Figure 8 is a front elevational view illustrating a rectangular target net for use in the portable party system of the present invention.

[0013] Figure 9 is a front elevational view illustrating a goal post target for use in the portable party system of the present invention.

[0014] Figure 10 is a perspective view illustrating a knock down target for use in the portable party system of the present invention.

[0015] Figure 11 is a perspective view illustrating a receptacle target assembly for use in the portable party system of the present invention.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

- [0016] Figure 12 is a perspective view illustrating various projectiles and a projectile storage box for use in the portable party system of the present invention.
- [0017] Figure 13 is a perspective view illustrating a milk bottle target for use in the portable party system of the present invention.
- [0018] Figure 14 is a perspective view illustrating various fasteners and a fastener storage box for use in the portable party system of the present invention.
- [0019] Figure 15 is a bottom front perspective view illustrating a tiered target for use in the portable party system of the present invention.
- [0020] Figure 16 is a top front perspective view illustrating the tiered target of Figure 15.
- [0021] Figure 17 is a perspective view illustrating a target support base secured to the container cover for use in the portable party system of the present invention.

Detailed Description

- [0022] Referring now to the drawings, wherein like reference numerals designate corresponding structure throughout the views, and referring in particular to Figure 1, a portable party system 10 according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention includes a hollow container 12, preferably constructed from a plastic material in a manner similar to a conventional cooler, and provided with a name or indicia plate 14 secured by screws, rivets or the like, for the purpose of bearing indicia designating a brand name of the party service and optionally other identifying information such as the contents of the container 12. The portable party system 10 includes a removable cover 16 detachably secured to the container 12 by latches or other securement devices 18 of a conventional form. As may be understood with reference to Figure 2, the latches 18 (only one of which is shown, the non-illustrated latch being identical to that shown) cooperate with complementary catch members 20 (only one of which is shown, the non-illustrated catch member being identical to that shown) provided at juxtaposed locations at opposite end portions of the cover 16.
- [0023] With reference to Figure 4, the underside 22 of the cover 16 is preferably provided with support foot members 24, 26, 28 and 30 disposed at respective corner regions of the cover 16 for the purpose of supporting the cover 16 on the surface of a floor or a table. Preferably, the support foot members, 24, 26, 28 and 30 are formed from a non-slip material such as suitably configured and textured plastic, felt, fabric, rubber or combinations of the foregoing, in order to resist displacement of the cover 16 along the surface of a table or floor during play of games pursuant to the present invention. In accordance with the present invention, the cover 16 is preferably provided

with a pair of spaced apertures 17 and 19 for the purpose of detachably securing a target attachment assembly 40, an example embodiment of which is depicted in Figure 5.

[0024] With reference to Figure 5, the target attachment assembly 40 includes an elongated base member 42 provided with a pair of spaced, threaded studs 44 and 46 dimensioned and disposed for engagement with the apertures 17 and 19 formed through the cover 16, as shown in Figure 4. The threaded studs 44 and 46, in conjunction with washers 52 and 54 and wing nuts 48 and 50 allow a user to selectively and detachably secure the target base assembly 40 to the upper surface of the cover 16, as shown in Figure 6. The target attachment assembly 40 also includes an upstanding support member 56 supporting a substantially vertical tubular standard 58, which terminates at a distal end portion in a threaded connector 60.

[0025] As shown in Figure 6, a first, lower end portion of a vertical extension member 62 terminates in a cooperating threaded connection 64 adapted for selective engagement with the threaded connector 60. At an opposite, upper end portion, the extension member 62 terminates in a similar threaded connection member 66 adapted for releasable engagement with a complementary threaded member 74 secured to a basketball target assembly 68. As one aspect of the present invention, it is contemplated that a plurality of different lengths of vertical extension members 62 may be provided, to allow adaptation to dispose the various target assemblies at different heights, for example, to adapt the party system for use with different sizes and ages of children and other participants. To provide a further range of flexibility of use and height adjustment, the cover 16 maybe supported on a floor or table. Further, the cover 16 may be used mounted on the container 12, or detached therefrom.

[0026] The basketball target assembly 68 includes a backboard portion 70 provided with a generally U-shaped tubular frame portion 72 for the purpose of connecting the basketball target assembly 68 to the vertical extension member 62 by cooperative engagement of the threaded members 66 and 74, and also for the purpose of support of a basketball rim 78 and associated basketball net 80 through engagement of a bracket 76. The bracket 76 is preferably formed from a flexible or resilient material to allow some flexing and displacement of the rim 78 without damage to the associated target assembly.

[0027] In addition to the basketball target assembly 68, the present invention contemplates the use of various different target assemblies to permit the play of many different party games, while affording compact and convenient storage and transportation of the entire portable party system according to the present invention.

[0028] Figure 7 illustrates a rectangular target assembly 80 preferably constructed from a plurality of tubular frame members 82, 84, 86, 88, and 90 erected in a rigid

manner by a plurality of 90-degree elbow joints 96, 98, 100, and 102. A T-connector 92 connects the frame members 88 and 90 and includes a threaded connection portion 94 adapted for threaded engagement with the connector 66 disposed at the upper end of the vertical extension member 62 illustrated in Figure 6. The various tubular components used in the construction of the portable party system of the present invention may comprise metal or plastic, but preferably comprise conventional PVC pipe and connectors. In use, a game player attempts to throw a projectile through the rectangular target 80, within the rectangular opening defined by the frame members 82, 84, 86, 88, and 90.

[0029] Figure 8 illustrates a rectangular target net assembly 120 that includes a rectangular frame formed by tubular frame members 122, 124, 126, 128, and 130, substantially rigidly connected by a plurality of 90-degree elbow joint connectors 136, 138, 140, and 142. A T-connector 132 connects frame members 128 and 130 and includes a threaded connector portion 134 adapted for threaded engagement with the threaded connector 66 disposed at an upper end portion of the vertical extension member 62 shown in Figure 6. In use, a game player attempts to throw, toss, or kick a projectile into a net 121 supported by the target net assembly 120. In this manner, the target net assembly may be used to allow participants to compete in a game involving the catching of a thrown ball in the net. Alternatively, a game simulating the game of soccer in some respects may be played.

[0030] Figure 9 illustrates a goal post target assembly 150 including a pair of spaced, parallel vertical tubular frame members 152 and 154 substantially rigidly supported by horizontal frame members 156 and 158 connected by a T-shaped connector 160 and 90-degree elbow joint connectors 166 and 168. The T-shaped connector 160 includes a threaded connection member 162 disposed in threaded engagement with a vertical central frame member 164 adapted for threaded engagement with the threaded connector 66 disposed at the upper end of the vertical extension member 62 illustrated in Figure 6. End caps 170 and 172 are secured at respective upper end portions of the frame members 152 and 154. In use, a game player attempts to throw, toss, or kick a projectile through or between the frame members 152 and 154, thus scoring a goal.

[0031] Figure 10 illustrates a knock down target assembly 180 including base members 182 and 183 supporting knock down targets 184 and 188. Preferably, the knock down targets 184 and 188 include respective L-shaped brackets 186 and 190 operative to magnetically retain the targets 184 and 188 in a vertical orientation. More specifically, the brackets 186 and 190 and an upper rail surface 192 of the mounting block 182 preferably include cooperating magnetic fasteners adapted to retain the targets 184 and 188 in an upright orientation as shown with respect to target 184, until the surface of the target is struck with sufficient force by a projectile. Upon striking with

a projectile, the target will fall down, as illustrated with respect to the target 188. Toward this end, the targets 184 and 188 may be connected to the mounting blocks 182 and/or 183 by means of a hinge fastener 181. The hinge fastener 181 may take the form of a conventional door or cabinet hinge or may comprise a strip of flexible material such as plastic, fabric, leather, or rubber. As a preferred feature of the present invention, the target 180 may include targets of different shape, such that a smaller target 188 would be more difficult to hit with a thrown, tossed, or kicked projectile than a larger target 184. In addition, a number other than two targets may be employed. Currently, a knock down target assembly employing three knock down targets is preferred. In use, a game player attempts to knock down the targets 184 and 188, according to the particular game rules, by throwing, tossing or kicking a designated projectile.

[0032] Figure 11 illustrates a receptacle target assembly 200 that includes a cup-shaped receptacle 204 substantially rigidly connected to a mounting block or base 202. In use, a game player attempts to throw, toss, or kick a designated projectile such that it lands within the receptacle or cup 204.

[0033] Figure 12 illustrates a projectile storage container 220 dimensioned and adapted for storage within the interior of the container 12 shown in Figures 1 and 2. Projectile storage container 220 includes a shallow rectangular tray portion 222 selectively closable by a lid 224 connected for movement between the open position illustrated in Figure 12 and a closed position by a plurality of hinges 226. The projectile container 220 provides for the organized storage of a variety of diverse projectiles adapted for use in playing games according to the preferred method of use of the portable party system according to the present invention. Preferred projectiles include at least one, and preferably a plurality of soft throwing disks 228, a football 230, a basketball 232, a baseball 234, soft baseball-type balls 236, 238, and 240, a wiffle ball 242, a soccer ball 246 and a plurality of beanbags 248, 250, 252, and 254. Preferably, the projectiles according to the present invention also include a plurality of masks 256, 258, 260, and 262. While the masks 256, 258, and 260 illustrated take the form of butterfly representations, a variety of different masks configurations may be employed without departing from the intended scope of the present invention. Optionally, the masks 256, 258, 260, and 262 may be adapted for use not only as projectiles in playing tossing and throwing games according to the present invention, but may also be adapted for wearing as masks by party attendees. Preferably, all of the various projectiles are formed from a relatively soft material and constructed so as to reduce the likelihood of injury to game participants and damage to the party environment.

[0034] Figure 13 illustrates a milk bottle target 270 including a circular disk-shaped base 272 forming a support platform for a plurality of plastic bottle targets 274, 276, and 278 tethered to the base 272 by respective strings or cords 280, 282, and 284. In

use, a game participant attempts to knock down the bottles 274, 276, and 278 by throwing a ball, beanbag, or other designated projectile. It should be noted that the bottles 274, 276, and 278 may be placed singly as shown in Figure 13, or with one stacked atop the other two.

[0035] Figure 14 illustrates a fastener storage box 300 including a lid 302 secured to a base 304 by hinges 306 and 308 and selectively latchable in a closed position by cooperating engagement of a catch 310 on the lid 302 with a cooperating latch member 312 disposed on the box 304. The box portion 304 preferably includes a plurality of interior storage divisions or compartments dimensioned for the reception and storage of various fastener components for use in the portable party system of the present invention. Specifically, the box portion 304 stores a length or supply of cord or string 314 for use, for example in tethering the bottles 274, 276, and 278 illustrated in Figure 13. In addition, a spare supply 316 of various washers and wing nuts is provided in a further compartment, as is a supply of spare support foot members 318 adapted for use on the underside of the cover 16 illustrated in Figure 4. A supply of thumb screws 320, used for securement of the target assemblies in a manner to be described subsequently, is also provided, in addition to a plurality of wire or cable ties 322 adapted to be used for miscellaneous repairs, such as repairing a hole torn in a net. Figures 15 and 16 illustrate a two-tiered coin toss target 350 including a central support shaft or spindle 352 centrally securing coaxial cylindrical disks members 354 and 356 in vertically spaced relation as shown. The lower end portion of the support shaft 352 terminates in a threaded connector 353 adapted for engagement with the threaded connector 60 illustrated in Figure 6. In use, a user tosses coins, chips, or tokens at the two-tiered coin toss target 350 in an attempt to land the coin, chip, or token on one of the disks 354 or 356. The surface texture or roughness of the disk 354 and 356 may be selectively varied or otherwise determined to regulate the difficulty of the game. For example, a very smooth, polished surface may be provided on one, or both of the disks 354 and 356 to make the game more difficult. Alternatively, a roughened surface, for example, a non-skid paint or rubber mat, may be employed to make the game easier. In this regard it is contemplated that one of the disks may have a smoother surface to make the landing of a coin, chip, or token on that particular disk more difficult, and thus potentially scoring a greater amount of points.

[0036] Figure 17 illustrates the cover 16 supporting a second type of target attachment assembly 400 according to the portable party system of the present invention. The target attachment assembly 400 includes a support plate or block 402 preferably secured to the cover 16 through the use of threaded studs, washers, and wing nuts, as illustrated and described previously in connection with Figures 4 and 5. A central upstanding support member or column 404 stands centrally and vertically upwardly from the base plate 402 and terminates at an upper end in a perpendicularly connected platform 406 provided with a plurality of apertures 408, 410, 412, and 414

adapted for engagement with threaded fasteners such as studs, bolts, or preferably thumb screws of the type illustrated at 320 in Figure 14. In use, the aforementioned appropriate threaded fasteners may be utilized to selectively attach targets of the type illustrated in Figures 10, 11, and 13.

- [0037] The particular details of the connections of the base member, extension members, and target assemblies as described and illustrated are exemplary only, and other alternative constructions and connectors may be employed, without departing from the intended scope of the present invention.
- [0038] In addition, other, non-target, game attachments may be employed to allow participants to play other types of games. For example, duck pond, ring toss, dart board, soccer goal, and various other diverse types of game attachments may be employed in connection with the portable party system of the present invention.
- [0039] As a further enhancement, the portable party system of the present invention may include carnival type decorations and amenities such as balloons, music, tents, banners, partitions, and the like to assist in the provision of a party or carnival type atmosphere and ambience.
- [0040] In a preferred method of entertaining participants at a party according to the present invention, a plurality of projectile tossing, throwing, and/or kicking games are preferably conducted in an organized manner by a party service provider or host. Winners of the various games are awarded points, tickets, or coupons, which may be exchanged for arcade-type prizes such as, toys, candy, balls, pencils, erasers, figurines, stuffed animals, games, and the like. A further aspect of the invention contemplates that a parent, teacher, coach or other individual having a need to provide a party for children, teenagers, or adults, may hire a commercial party service provider. The party service provider may readily and easily transport the portable party system according to the present invention to a desired site at a home, school or other facility, thus avoiding the inconvenience, danger, and expense associated with transporting the participants to a central party facility.
- [0041] It is to be understood, however, that even though numerous characteristics and advantages of the present invention have been set forth in the foregoing description, together with details of the structure and function of the invention, the disclosure is illustrative only, and changes may be made in detail, especially in matters of shape, size and arrangement of parts within the principles of the invention to the full extent indicated by the broad general meaning of the terms in which the appended claims are expressed.
- [0042]